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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.
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07/15/99 10/28/99 CLIF

P 320-78

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CANADA

1M92/0101

AIR MAIL

EXAMINER

ELECTRONICS

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

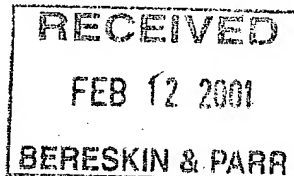
1713

DATE MAILED:

01/21/01

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Commissioner of Patents and Trad marks



Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/425,236

Applicant(s)

Cote et al.

Examiner

Ana Fortuna

Group Art Unit

1723

☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on Nov 13, 2000

☒ This action is FINAL.

☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

A shortened statutory period for response to this action is set to expire 3 month(s), or thirty days, whichever is longer, from the mailing date of this communication. Failure to respond within the period for response will cause the application to become abandoned. (35 U.S.C. § 133). Extensions of time may be obtained under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a).

Disposition of Claims

☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 5-7, 9, and 10 is/are pending in the application.

Of the above, claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 5-7, 9, and 10 is/are rejected.

☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

☐ Claims _____ are subject to restriction or election requirement.

Application Papers

☐ See the attached Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948.

☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are objected to by the Examiner.

☐ The proposed drawing correction, filed on _____ is ☐ approved ☐ disapproved.

☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d).

☐ All ☐ Some* ☐ None of the CERTIFIED copies of the priority documents have been received.

☐ received in Application No. (Series Code/Serial Number) _____

☐ received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

*Certified copies not received: _____

☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).

Attachment(s)

☐ Notice of References Cited, PTO-892

☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s), PTO-1449, Paper No(s). 9

☐ Interview Summary, PTO-413

☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948

☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application, PTO-152

--- SEE OFFICE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES ---

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DETAILED ACTION

1. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

2. Claims 1-3, 5-7, 9-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cote et al. (WO 97/18887). Reference '887 discloses the process claimed including treating an effluent with an installation including an immersed membrane system having means for backwashing the membrane with a cleaning agent periodically, and at least partially draining the effluent contained in the filtration tank to expose the membranes to air during cleaning. Cleaning in sequence of 30 minutes to 4 hours (total cleaning cycle), and aerating the membrane with air bubbles is also disclosed. The cleaning agents and suggested concentration for a particular period of time are also disclosed. Reducing the volume of reactant and the cleaning time by using the cleaning method including at least draining the tank while backwashing is disclosed (entire disclosure pages 1-22 and figures). Regarding claim 6, reference '887 also discloses performing the cleaning process as conventional in the art, e.g. without draining the tank (example 17), or draining the tank after cleaning. Transferring the content of one tank to another tank while performing the backwashing, for partially exposing the membrane to air is disclosed. (US 6,045,698 is equivalent for translation purpose). Regarding claim 1, draining the tank between 2-20 minutes is not disclosed by reference '887, however, reference '887 suggest performing a

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chemical cycle with base or NaClO for a period of 10 minutes and 5 minutes respectively (table 1). It would have been obvious to one skilled in the art performing only chemical treatment to use the treatment time as suggested by '887. Regarding step g), performing the cleaning step simultaneously with the draining of the tank is suggested by '887, because cleaning and exposing the membrane to air, and simultaneously transferring the content of the tank to another tank while performing the cleaning is disclosed. Performing the cleaning operation with the tank empty as compared to performing the cleaning with the tank full of the feed or concentrate was found to be optimum in reference '887. Therefore, performing the cleaning operation with the tank partially filled, e.g. or draining the tank during the cleaning process is also expected to have an improvement over the cleaning with the tank full, based on the feed fluid pressure exerted by the concentrate over the membrane, more pressure will be needed for backwash. Furthermore, exposing the membrane to air occurs during the draining process, as suggested by '887. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the pertinent art, based on the reasons discussed above, to simultaneously drain the tank and backwash the membranes, and further select a cleaning time equal to the time of one chemical cycle. Reference '887 fails to disclose the total concentration of chemical needed for cleaning the membrane in a week as min. mg/l, but discloses using NaOCL as cleaning agent in a concentration of 0.03 % in 100l/h for 15 minutes, and also discloses using between 2 to 20 liters per square meters of membrane. Therefore, the concentration of NaOCL needed for cleaning a predetermined membrane area during a week can be determined by the skilled artisan based on the information provided by '887, e.g. by selecting a

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predetermined membrane area, the number of cleaning steps to be performed during a week and the frequency of cleaning, and also depending of the thickness of the layer of clogging material deposited on the membrane. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the pertinent art to perform the cleaning process with different concentration of chemical agents, depending on the degree of clogging and the frequency of cleaning, e.g. when the frequency of cleaning increases it would have been obvious to slightly reduce the concentration of the agent, since the membrane will be more clean at short time of use. Regarding claim 2, cleaning the membrane once a day or more times a day, and cleaning the membrane at a predetermined time interval would have been obvious to the skilled artisan at the time the invention was made, since the cleaning formulations, frequency of cleaning depend on the stream being processed, the degree of fouling, the extent of the concentration, etc. It would have been obvious to one skilled in the pertinent art to optimize this conditions for a particular process. In addition, the clogging can be determined before permeate flux is zero, but, for a predetermined minimum permeate flux desired. Therefore, the conditions for membrane permeability before backwashing or cleaning it would have been obvious to the skilled in the art at the time the invention was made.

3. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

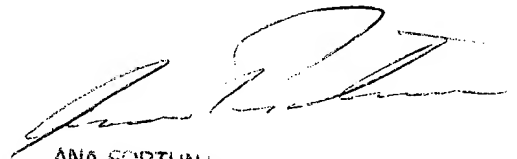
A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not

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mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Ana Fortuna whose telephone number is (703) 308-3857.

Facsimile No. (703)305-7718.



ANA FORTUNA
PRIMARY EXAMINER
GROUP 1000

Ana Fortuna

January 27, 2001